



## **Ripon Grammar School**

### **Peer on Peer Abuse Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

Ripon Grammar School is committed to the prevention, early identification, and appropriate management of peer-on-peer abuse within the school community.

All staff have a responsibility for tackling peer on peer abuse. Concerns should be reported to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. In an emergency, all staff should be able to make a referral themselves to the local authority's children's social care services.

For the purpose of this policy, peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse and coercive control, exercised between students, and within student's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associates.

This is most likely to include but may not be limited to:

- (1) Serious bullying including cyber-bullying.
- (2) Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, pulling hair or anything else causing physical harm.
- (3) Relationship abuse, domestic violence and abuse.
- (4) Child sexual exploitation.
- (5) Youth and serious youth violence
- (6) Harmful sexual behaviour including sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault.
- (7) Sexual Harassment such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes or online sexual harassment which maybe stand alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- (8) Up skirting which involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing.
- (9) Initiations/hazing type rituals.
- (10) Prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

#### **2. Policy**

To combat peer on peer abuse the school will:

- Actively seek to raise awareness of and prevent all forms of peer-on-peer abuse by conducting training for governors and staff, students and parents on the nature, prevalence and effect of peer-on-peer abuse, and how to prevent, identify, and respond to it.
- Promote the idea that every member of the School community is responsible for building and maintaining safe and positive relationships, and helping to create a safe School environment in which violence and abuse are never acceptable.
- Engage with North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in relation to peer on-peer abuse, and work closely with, for example, Children's Social Care, the police, Early Help.

- Respond to concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse sensitively, appropriately and promptly and ensure students feel able to share their concerns openly, in a non-judgmental environment, and have them listened to.
- Apply sanctions that are balanced against any police investigation, the student/student's unmet needs and any other action intervention planned regarding safeguarding concerns.

### **3. Procedures**

#### **3.1 Training**

Training for staff and governors will cover the following areas:

- Contextual Safeguarding
- The identification and classification of specific behaviours, including digital behaviours.
- The importance of taking seriously all forms of peer-on-peer abuse (no matter how 'low level' they may appear) and ensuring that no form of peer-on-peer abuse is ever dismissed as horseplay or teasing.
- Social media and online safety, including how to encourage students to use social media in a positive, responsible and safe way, and how to enable them to identify and manage abusive behaviour online.

#### **3.2 Education**

Students will be taught via PSHCE, tutor time, assemblies and the wider curriculum:

- About the nature and prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse, positive and responsible safe use of social media, and the unequivocal facts of, for example, the age of consent, the definition of rape.
- What to do if they witness or experience such abuse, the effect that it can have on those who experience it and the possible reasons for it, including vulnerability of those who inflict such abuse.

#### **3.3. Engaging parents**

Providing information to parents via bulletins/discussions including:

- Perceptions of the risks facing their child
- Supporting the on-going welfare of the student body by drawing on multiple resources that prioritise student mental health, and by providing in-school counselling and therapy to address underlying mental health needs.
- Working with parents to address equality issues, to promote positive values, and to encourage a culture of tolerance and respect amongst all members of the School community both on school premises and at all other times.

#### **3.4 Multiagency working**

The relationships the school has built with partners are essential to ensuring that the school is able to prevent, identify early, and appropriately handle cases of peer-on-peer abuse. The school actively refers concerns and allegations of peer-on-peer abuse where necessary to children's social care, the police, and/or relevant agencies with the Local Safeguarding Partnership Procedures.

They help the school to:

- Develop a good awareness and understanding of the different referral pathways that operate in its local area, as well as the preventative and support services which exist
- Ensure that its students are able to access the range of services and support they need quickly
- Support and help inform the School's local community's response to peer-on-peer abuse.
- Increase the School's awareness and understanding of any concerning trends and emerging risks in its local area to enable it to take preventative action to minimise the risk of these being experienced by its students.

### **3.5 Responding to concerns or allegations of peer-on-peer abuse.**

Staff will:

- Investigate the concern(s) or allegation(s), and the wider context in which it/they may have occurred (as appropriate). Depending on the nature and seriousness of the alleged incident(s), it may be appropriate for the police and/or children's social care to carry out this investigation.
- Treat all students involved as being at potential risk while the student allegedly responsible for the abuse may pose a significant risk of harm to other children, s/he may also have considerable unmet needs and be at risk of harm themselves.
- The School will ensure that a safeguarding response is in place for both the student who has allegedly experienced the abuse, and the student who has allegedly been responsible for it, and additional sanctioning work may be required for the latter.
- Take into account that the abuse may indicate wider safeguarding concerns for any of the students involved, and consider and address the effect of wider sociocultural contexts – such as the student's peer group (both within and outside the school); family; the school environment; their experience(s) of crime and victimisation in the local community; and the child/children's online presence. Consider what changes may need to be made to these contexts to address the student's needs and to mitigate risk, and the potential complexity of peer-on-peer abuse and of student's experiences, and consider the interplay between power, choice and consent. While students may appear to be making choices, if those choices are limited, they are not consenting,
- Obtain the views of the student/students affected. Unless it is considered unsafe to do so (for example, where a referral needs to be made immediately), the DSL should discuss the proposed action with the child/children and their parents, and obtain consent to any referral before it is made. The school should manage the student/student's expectations about information sharing, and keep them and their parents informed of developments, where appropriate and safe to do so. It is particularly important to consider the wishes of any student who has allegedly been abused, and to give that student as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and how they will be supported
- If a member of staff thinks for whatever reason that a student may be at risk of or experiencing abuse by their peer(s), or that a student may be at risk of abusing or may be abusing their peer(s), they should discuss their concern with the DSL without delay or record on CPOMS so that a course of action can be agreed. The DSL may discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the member of staff who has reported it/them and will, where necessary, take any immediate steps to ensure the safety of the student/all students affected. Where any concern(s) or allegation(s) indicate(s) that indecent images of a student or students may have been shared online, the DSL should consider what urgent action can be taken in addition to the actions and referral duties set out in this policy, to seek specialist help in preventing the images spreading further and removing the images from the internet.
- DSLs should always use their professional judgement to: (a) assess the nature and seriousness of the alleged behaviour, and (b) determine whether it is appropriate for the alleged behaviour to be to be dealt with internally and, if so, whether any external specialist support is required. In borderline cases the DSL may wish to consult with Children and Families professional advice line and/or other relevant agencies in

accordance with the NYSCP on a no-names basis (where possible) to determine the most appropriate response.

- Where the DSL considers or suspects that the alleged behaviour in question might be abusive or violent, in accordance with the published threshold guidance, or where the needs and circumstances of the individual student/students in question might otherwise require it, the DSL should contact children's social care and/or the police immediately and, in any event, within 24 hours of the DSL becoming aware of the alleged behaviour.
- NB: This does not prevent any member of staff making a referral to social care in an emergency, for example where the DSL cannot be contacted or found. All staff should be aware of the referral process.
- The DSL will discuss the concern(s) or allegation(s) with the agency and agree on a course of action, which may include:
  1. Manage internally with help from external specialists where appropriate and possible.
  2. Undertake/contribute to an inter-agency early help assessment, with targeted early help services provided to address the assessed needs of the student/students and their family. These services may, for example, include family and parenting programmes, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra-familial contexts, a specialist harmful sexual behaviour team, CAMHS and/or youth offending services.
  3. Refer the student/students to children's social care for a section 17/47 statutory assessment. Where a student is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and, if appropriate, a report to the police) is made immediately. This referral will be made to children's social care in the area where the/each student lives. Depending on the local safeguarding procedures, there will normally be an initial review and assessment if an incident of peer-on-peer abuse requires referral to and action by children's social care and a strategy meeting is convened, then the School will hold every professional involved in the case accountable for their safeguarding response, including themselves, to both the/each student who has experienced the abuse, and the/each student who was responsible for it and the contexts to which the abuse was associated.
  4. Report alleged criminal behaviour to the police. Alleged criminal behaviour will ordinarily be reported to the police. All allegations will be assessed on case-by-case basis.

### **3.6 Sanctions**

- Before deciding on appropriate action RGS will always consider its duty to safeguard all its students in its care from harm; the underlying reason for a student's behaviour, any unmet needs, or harm or abuse suffered by the student; the risk that the student may pose to other children and the severity of the peer-on-peer abuse and the causes of it.
- Be aware of the nature and level of risk to which students are or may be exposed, and put in place a clear and comprehensive strategy which is tailored to our specific safeguarding context.
- Take a whole-school community contextual safeguarding approach to responding to peer-on-peer abuse.

**Policy last reviewed: September 2021**

## **Appendix 1: Safeguarding Leads**

Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Marita Murray [Deputy Head Pastoral]
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Helen Keelan-Edwards [Deputy Head Teaching and Learning]

## **Appendix 2: Linked RGS policies and wider guidance:**

- Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2021.
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Between Children in Schools and Colleges (DfE May 2018)

## **Appendix 3: How can a child who is being abused by their peers be identified?**

All staff should be alert to the wellbeing of students and to signs of abuse. Signs that a child may be suffering from peer-on-peer abuse:

1. Failing to attend school, disengaging from classes or struggling to carry out school or extracurricular activities to the standard ordinarily expected.
2. Regularly feeling sick/unwell in a morning
3. Physical injuries to include unexplained bruises and cuts.
4. Experiencing difficulties with mental health and/or emotional well-being.
5. Becoming withdrawn and/or shy, experiencing headaches, anxiety and/or panic attacks, suffering from nightmares or lack of sleep or sleeping too much.
6. Broader changes in behaviour.

Any child can be vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to the strength of peer influence during adolescence, and staff should be alert to signs of such abuse amongst all children. Individual and situational factors can increase a child's vulnerability to abuse by their peers. For example, an image of a child could be shared, following which they could become more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse due to how others now perceived dynamics can also play an important role in determining a child's vulnerability to such abuse. For example, children who are more likely to follow others and/or who are socially isolated from their peers may be more vulnerable to peer-on-peer abuse. Children who are questioning or exploring their sexuality may also be particularly vulnerable to abuse by their peers.

Research suggests that:

1. Peer-on-peer abuse may affect boys differently from girls, and that this difference may result from societal norms (particularly around power, control and the way in which femininity and masculinity are constructed) rather than biological make-up. Barriers to disclosure will also be different. As a result, schools need to explore the gender dynamics of peer-on-peer abuse within their settings and recognise that these will play out differently in single sex, mixed or gender-imbalanced environments.
2. Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) are three times more likely to be abused than their peers without SEND and additional barriers can sometimes exist when recognising abuse in children with SEND. These can include:
  - Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child's disability without further exploration.

- The potential for children with SEND to be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying and harassment, without outwardly showing any signs,
- Communication barriers and difficulties and overcoming these barriers.
- Some children may be more likely to experience peer-on-peer abuse than others as a result of certain characteristics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or religious beliefs.